

HOOKEDNOW

DAVE SKIP RICK
HUGHES-MORRIS-HAFELE

WELCOME to the June-July issue of *HookedNow*. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions or comments at: sweltsa@frontier.com (include "HookedNow" in the subject line for quicker replies). And please tell your fishing buddies about *HookedNow*.

June and July bring plenty of bug activity, surface feeding fish, and frequent challenges in knowing just what the fish are taking. These two months also usher in some of the biggest caddisfly hatches of the year. Given that caddisflies have quite different behavior when it comes to emerging than either mayflies or stoneflies, we thought it would be appropriate to focus our attention in this issue on caddis pupae. The pupal stage can be hard to observe and even harder to know when fish have their attention turned on them. But if you understand pupa behavior and know what patterns and tactics to use at the right time, you can go home with some fish stories that will need little exaggeration. HAPPY CASTS!

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Photo by Rick Hafele



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RICK HAFELE- CADDIS PUPAE: THE HIDDEN STAGE

Photo by Mark Bachmann



(All photos by Rick Hafele except where noted)

Caddisflies are different. The larvae do odd things like produce silk-like thread to construct underwater spider webs or build intricate cases out of sand, gravel, or leaves. Adults behave as if they have ADHD, and many females dive underwater and swim to the stream bottom to lay their eggs. And then there is the pupal stage, a stage of development that doesn't even exist for mayflies or stoneflies.

A pupal stage isn't unique to caddisflies in the insect world. In fact some of the most common insects we see everyday - ants, beetles, honey bees, butterflies - all go through a pupal stage during their life cycle. Insects that go through a pupal stage are said to have "complete metamorphosis," which means they have four stages of development: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Mayflies and stoneflies have only three main developmental stages: egg, larva (or nymph), and adult. Many well known insects besides mayflies and stoneflies also have this shortened version of a life cycle called "incomplete metamorphosis," including grasshoppers, crickets, stink bugs, aphids, and let us not forget dragonflies and damselflies.

Unless you have a particular, some might say *unusual*, interest in insects, most of the different stages insects pass through go unnoticed, and the fact that a grasshopper doesn't have a pupal stage but an ant does, really isn't an issue of concern. But, like caddisflies, fly fishers are also different. To be successful fly fishers need to pay attention to insects, especially those that trout like to eat, and trout definitely like to eat caddisfly pupae. Therefore, the fact that mayflies don't have a pupal stage and caddisflies do, is a central piece of knowledge that directly affects your fly-fishing success. To clearly see how caddis pupae influence your fishing success let's take a closer look at how pupal development occurs, how pupae behave, how trout eat them, and how best to imitate them.

Life as a Pupa

The life of a caddis pupa begins in secret. For those species where the larvae build cases, the larval case becomes the secret hiding spot for the pupa. Larvae first find a well protected and often hidden location, then they close both ends of the case with silk threads and bits of material creating a secure tomb-like shelter. For caddis species that

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don't build cases as larvae, the larvae actually construct a specific shelter just so the pupal stage can be protected during development. This usually is a tough shelter made of bits of sand and gravel firmly attached to a large stone or log on the stream or lake bottom.



Left: This is a larval caddis case with the pupa partially removed. Before becoming a pupa the larva seals both ends of its case after attaching it firmly to the stream bottom.



Right: This is a rough pupal shelter made of small gravel by a free-living green rock worm larva. While the larva builds no type of case, it constructs this rough shelter to protect the pupal stage.

Once the larvae have sealed their cases or constructed their shelters and are hidden inside their little tombs, they molt and take on a completely different appearance. For example, the short tiny antennae of the larva become body length filaments on the pupa. The stocky thick legs of the larva transform into the longer and more slender legs of the pupa. The head also changes shape. But perhaps most dramatic is the appearance of wingpads. In fact all of the features of the adult caddis come into place during the pupal stage. The full development of adult body parts requires that the pupae remain inside their shelters for at least three or four weeks, and sometimes as long as eight weeks.

While the pupae are maturing inside their case or shelter, they are safe and protected from feeding trout. That changes significantly once they are ready to take the leap to adulthood. Things now get interesting for the pupa, trout, and fly fisher. First, the mature pupa cuts its way out of the protective case with a pair of long mandibles developed solely for this purpose. These mature pupa are more accurately referred to as *pharate adults*, meaning they are fully formed adults in a pupa's clothing. It is this pharate adult that you are really imitating with pupa patterns during a caddis hatch. The clothing in this case is the pupa's exoskeleton or exuvia, which has now completely or nearly completely separated itself from the adult's exoskeleton already formed just underneath.

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This mature pupa is more correctly called a pharate adult, meaning that the adult stage is fully developed and ready to emerge, it is simply hidden under the pupal exoskeleton.

You might think of it as a snake that's starting to shed its old outer skin, but the transformation from caddis pupa to caddis adult is much more complex than a snake shedding its skin. For example, the pupa must maintain gills to breathe underwater, while the adult waiting to emerge has a completely different breathing system ready to use once it escapes into the air.

To help create the separation between the pupa's outer skin and the adult's inner skin, internal gases are expelled between the two layers creating one of the more interesting characteristics of emerging caddis; they shine as if coated with a silver bubble of air.

Besides helping the adult escape out of the pupa's exoskeleton, this bubble of gas trapped inside also helps the pupa rise quickly to the water's surface, and thus complete the ultimate challenge - make it to the surface alive!

Trout love caddis pupa, and they feed on them wherever pupae are easiest to catch. That can be near the bottom, mid-water, or near the surface. Some pupae begin their ascent to the surface immediately upon crawling out of their shelter, while the pupae of other species drift along the stream bottom for many feet before they get their bearings and the gasses form below their outer skin. The difference for the angler is the difference between fishing a caddis pupa pattern close to the stream bottom or lifting it up with a rising motion towards the surface.



This pupa made it to the water's surface. Soon the adult will escape from the pupal exoskeleton and fly away. Note the large mandibles at the very front of the head. These are used to cut out of the pupal shelter, and do not exist on the adult.

There are other differences in pupal behavior as well. The pupae of most caddis species are good swimmers using specially designed middle legs as oars. Swimming quickly to the surface helps reduce the chance of a trout grabbing them. But some pupae crawl or swim along the stream bottom until they reach shore and then crawl up an

exposed rock or log where the adult emerges. Still other species swim to the water's surface, then swim across the surface until they reach an exposed rock, log, etc., where they crawl from the water before the adult escapes. Such behavior differences can be difficult if not impossible to detect from the angler's view point, so if one presentation technique isn't working it's a good idea to try another.

One of the best descriptions of caddis pupa behavior I have come across is in the book *Caddisflies: A guide to Eastern species for anglers and other naturalists*, by Thomas Ames Jr. (Stackpole Books 2009). He breaks the

emergence process into three phases: phase 1 - drift along the stream bottom; phase 2 - rise to the surface; and phase 3 - drift at the surface before the adult escapes the pupal exuvia. He refers to this as drift-rise-drift. The rise phase is generally rapid for all caddis, but the drift phases vary from long to short indicating if they drift a long distance or a short

distance during that phase. So a caddis pupa that drifts a long distance near the bottom before rising quickly to the surface, then drifts a moderate distance before breaking through the surface film, would be described as having a long-rise-moderate emergence pattern. Another species might follow a short-rise-short behavior pattern, meaning it drifts a short distance near the bottom before rising to the surface, and also drifts a short distance just below the surface before the adult emerges.



Caddis pupa shucks left behind on a large boulder after the pupa crawled from the water before adult emergence. Most caddis adults emerge on the water's surface rather than dry land.



Many stream dwelling caddis pupate on the bottom in riffles and runs. During a good caddis hatch anglers must decide if they should fish pupa patterns near the bottom or let them rise up and swing near the surface.

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The value of this information to the angler is that it tells you where trout may concentrate their feeding, and thus where to fish your pupa patterns. For example, a species with long-rise-short behavior indicates fish have a good opportunity to feed on pupae while they drift near the stream bottom, so you would be wise to fish a pupa pattern deep along the stream bottom, especially during the early stages of a hatch. In contrast a species with short-rise-long behavior tells you fish would more likely focus their feeding near the surface, so fishing a pattern in the surface film would be a good idea. But don't ignore the rise phase. The rise of pupa to the surface is always rather quick, but trout often take pupae on their way up. This is why the Leisenring lift method of fishing pupa patterns is often so effective.

When?



It can be difficult to predict just when caddis pupae are swimming to the surface. Some emerge mid-day, others in the evening, and others at night.

according to location, but wherever you live you can probably find information on the specific hatch periods for the major caddis species in your area. The other timing issue - time of day - can be more difficult to nail down.

Besides the challenge of determining how caddis pupae behave, it can also be difficult to know when pupae leave the stream or lake bottom for emergence. This involves both seasonal timing and time of day. The time of year certain caddis species emerge is well known for most species that produce important fishing hatches. The Mother's Day caddis (*Brachycentrus occidentalis*) for example, emerges consistently in early

May, while the October caddis (*Dicosmoecus* sp.) is so named because of its fall emergence. The timing of hatches will vary

Seeing caddis adults flying around shoreline vegetation tells you a caddis hatch has occurred and that you should be looking for both emergence activity as well as egg laying activity, but when? Flights of egg laying adults versus adults taking off the water during emergence can be difficult to tell apart. It helps to know what caddis is flying around, because then you can look up information about when its daily emergence and egg laying time usually occurs. You don't need to know the exact species, a challenge beyond even the best fly fishers, but if you can tell what genus or even family



Lots of adult caddis on streamside grasses are a sure sign caddis hatches have been occurring. Knowing what these caddis are can help you determine what time of day they hatch.

of caddisfly is out, you can probably find some information on its typical timing. Depending on the species, emergence may occur in the morning, mid-afternoon, evening, or at night. Night emergence is more common for Eastern species and species that emerge in the summer.

When I see caddis adults abundant over the water I first watch them carefully to see if they are egg laying or not. Egg layers will usually spend more time over the water's surface while they either dip to the surface or dive below it to lay eggs. If the adults spend little time over the water, run across the surface, and are flying towards shoreline vegetation, then you can be pretty sure they have just emerged. The fish's behavior will also give you important clues. If adult caddis are active but trout feeding activity is subsurface then you should try a deep pupa pattern or a diving adult pattern. If fish are feeding aggressively at the surface try a pupa pattern fished in the film or an adult caddis pattern fished dry. You can also fish with two flies; one dry and one a pupa pattern on a dropper. If you know the caddis emerges at night, trout can often be enticed with a pupa pattern fished at first light in the morning.

Size & Color

Two other important variables when fishing caddis pupa are knowing the size and color of the natural. With the large diversity of caddis species found in streams and lakes, the range of sizes and colors of pupa is also diverse. While generalizations are possible, and most fly pattern books suggest size and color combinations for different caddis

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hatches, to be certain you have selected an appropriate pattern it's a good idea to collect a few natural pupae. This is easier than you may think. Remember that before pupae begin rising to the water's surface, they are sealed up inside the larval case or pupation shelter. By picking up bottom material like softball size rocks, large chunks of wood, or aquatic plants, you can quickly find a few pupating caddis. Now carefully peel away the case or shelter and inside you will see the developing pupa. If wingpads are pale then the pupa is immature and still has some time before emerging. But if the wingpads are dark brown or almost black, then you have a mature pupa nearly ready to emerge. The color and size of the mature pupa will tell you exactly what color and size your fly pattern should be. You may need to open several shelters to find a mature pupa, as not all pupa mature at the same time. And if you look at several pupae you will also likely see that they are not all the same color. Some color variation within the same species in the same stream or lake is quite common. For this reason, if you have two patterns one close in size but not color and the other close in color but not size, the pattern close in size is most often your best choice. I also like patterns that have loose fibers that move easily in the water creating life-like action or movement.



This brightly colored pupa (Brachycentridae) has pale wingpads indicating it is immature and needs more time to develop before emerging. It does however show the angler what size and color pattern should be used to match it.

Below is a chart that summarizes some key characteristics for seven major caddis hatches. The first five hatches occur across North America but with different species regionally. The Dark Blue Sedge as an Eastern hatch, while the October caddis is a Western hatch. Hatch times are only general guidelines as specific timing will vary regionally. Size & color will also vary by species and even within species so information listed here should be used as rough guides only.

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Caddis Hatch	Pupa Behavior	Emergence Location	General Pupa color & hook size	Hatch Timing Season: Daily:
Saddle-case caddis or short-horned sedge (<i>Glossosoma</i>)	Pupa are very active swimmers and may swim long distance at surface. <i>moderate-rise-long</i>	Surface: some pupae will also run on surface to find exposed rocks.	Thorax: black Body: brown to tan Legs: brown Size: 16-20	Season: May-Oct with peaks in spring & fall Daily: Morning or afternoon
Green Rock Worm (<i>Rhyacophila</i>)	Strong swimmers that rise quickly to the surface. <i>short-rise-short</i>	Surface. Adults escape rapidly.	Thorax: dark brown Body: green Legs: brown Size: 12-14	Season: Spring & fall Daily: Morning or afternoon
Spotted Sedge or net-spinning caddis (<i>Hydropsyche</i>)	Drift considerable distance along bottom before rising and at surface before emerging. <i>long-rise-short</i>	Surface	Thorax: brown Body: brown or olive Legs: brown Size: 12-16	Season: May-Sept with peaks in June & July Daily: Mid-day to evening
Little Sister Sedge (<i>Cheumatopsyche</i>)	Similar to <i>Hydropsyche</i> <i>long-rise-short</i>	Surface	Thorax: brown Body: green Legs: brown Size: 14-16	Season: As early as April with peaks in June & July Daily: Mid-day to evening
Grannom (<i>Brachycentrus</i>)	Drift some distance along bottom before rising and at surface. <i>moderate-rise-moderate</i>	Surface	Thorax: dark brown Body: green Legs: brown Size: 14-18	Season: April-May and late August-Sept Daily: Late morning through afternoon
Dark Blue Sedge (<i>Psilotreta</i>)	Drift some distance along bottom before swimming to surface. <i>long-rise-short</i>	Surface	Thorax: black Body: green Legs: brown Size: 12-14	Season: May-Aug with peaks in June & July Daily: Evening
October Caddis (<i>Dicosmoecus</i>)	Crawl along stream bottom until they reach shoreline rocks. <i>long-none-none</i>	Above water on exposed rocks	Thorax: dark brown Body: yellow to tan Legs: light brown Size: 8-12	Season: Sept-Oct Daily: Night

Books for further reading:

There are a variety of books published with good information about caddisflies. Here are some I find particularly useful.

Caddisflies: A Guide to Eastern Species for Anglers and other Naturalists, by Thomas Ames, Jr. (Stackpole Books 2009). This is the most in-depth book concerning caddisflies I know of

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for the angler. While its focus is limited to Eastern species, the information about behavior, patterns, and tactics has much broader application.

Caddis Super Hatches: Hatch Guide for the United States, by Carol Richards and Bob Braendle (Frank Amato Publications 1997). This is a well designed book with excellent information that covers all regions of the country.

BugWater, by Arlen Thomason (Stackpole Books 2010). This book isn't specifically about caddisflies, but it does cover several major Western caddis hatches, and does so with unique insights and exceptional photos.

Caddisflies by Gary LaFontaine (Nick Lyons Books 1981). A classic book that is still relevant. It has enough insightful information about caddisfly behavior, hatches, patterns, and tactics to keep you thinking for decades.



This photo shows the pupa of Arctopsyche grandis the giant net-spinning caddis. This large - size 10 - caddis pupa emerges in late May to mid-June on many rapid Western streams. If you are lucky enough to be on a stream with a good population at the right time, you will enjoy some exciting fishing.

[CLICK HERE](#)

for a video of Rick discussing caddis pupae behavior.

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SKIP MORRIS – IMITATING CADDIS PUPAE: THEORY & PRACTICE

All photos by Carol Ann Morris except where noted



On the whole, you don't design an imitation of a caddis pupa the way you would an imitation of a mayfly or stonefly nymph...unless you haven't thought this through (or don't really care about catching trout). For one thing, a mayfly or stonefly nymph's form is different from a caddis pupa's--different enough to normally call for different flies. In fact, nymphs of stoneflies and mayflies are similar enough--six legs jutting out to the sides, two or three tails, the hump of one or more wing cases on the back, at least a fairly slim abdomen--that lots of fly patterns can effectively suggest both.

A caddis pupa is another story--long legs (only two of those prominent during its swim up to hatch); no tails; wing pads instead of wing cases, with one on each side rather than the mayfly or stonefly's backpack case; and a *plump* abdomen with something of a bulge often near the rear end.

And then there's the matter of movement. Yes, mayfly and stonefly nymphs can swim, some actually pretty well. But in rivers we nearly always fish imitations dead drift, and we do so because that works. Even the better swimmers among the mayflies get tossed around by the jumble of current among the cobble and rip-rap of a riverbed. Not so much a caddis pupa--caddis pupae are the Navy SEALs of swimming insects that hatch. Stroking their powerful middle legs they travel in pulses up through all sorts of turbulence to hatch. So with caddis imitations, especially near the water's surface, we often fish them not dead drift like a mayfly nymph but with motion.



Caddis pupae may look clumsy, but with legs made for swimming and buoyant gas within their shucks for lift they quickly reach the water's surface.

Finally, the how and when of caddis hatches and imitations versus those of mayflies and stoneflies. During a mayfly or stonefly hatch, the solution is usually floating flies (dry flies) or with mayfly hatches perhaps half-floating flies (emergers). If an artificial nymph is used during a mayfly hatch it's back to dead

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drift, but near the surface. Stoneflies don't hatch in the open--that's why emerger-flies and near-surface nymphs make no sense. But a caddis hatch is removed from any of this. Yes, dry flies and emergers can be best during a caddis hatch, but often it's an imitation of a stroking pupa that interests trout most. So a caddis pupa for surface (or *near*-surface) trout is usually fished just a few inches down and with *action*. These differences again call for differences in materials and their arrangement.

Bearing all this in mind, let's look at some caddis-pupa fly patterns and consider why they're designed as they are.

Fox's Poopah

Photo by Skip Morris



Fox's Poopah, Olive (Tim Fox)

HOOK: Heavy wire, 1X long, sizes 14 and 12.

BEAD: Gold metal.

THREAD: Brown 8/0 or 6/0.

RIB: Small gold wire (or copper). The rib secures the abdomen.

UNDERBODY: Flat pearl tinsel.

ABDOMEN: Olive Vernille or Ultrachenille, melted on the end.

LEGS: Mottled-brown hen-back or partridge.

ANTENNAE: Two wood-duck or mallard-dyed-wood-duck fibers.

THORAX: Black Ostrich herl.

Tim Fox's caddis-pupa fly caught on quickly, and now you'll see it commonly in fly-shop bins and catalogs. It's a solid and inventive new design, yet in many ways it's typical of nymphs that imitate caddis pupae.

For starters, the abdomen of the Fox's Poopah is plump. It should be--caddis-pupa abdomens are plump too. Some older patterns for caddis have skimpy bodies yet work because they imitate the size and shape and movement of caddis pupae. Nevertheless, plump makes sense for caddis.

There are long legs and antennae, which also makes sense because caddis pupae have long legs and antennae.

There is a collar of soft ostrich herl free to wave under water--caddis pupae are lively swimmers, so anything that adds movement to an imitation to help suggest a

swimming action is a good touch. There are supple legs to wave when current works them or when the fly is twitched. The legs on Tim's fly lie back under the body, partly protected from such motion; still, they probably do some waving, as do the antennae. We'll soon consider some flies with angled-out legs that really like to move.

A gold bead may lead the fly (it can be tied with or without a bead), and that's typical these days. Beads have caught on to the point that popular nymphs featuring them are probably more common than ones lacking them in North America. The primary advantage of metal-bead flies is that they sink with determination. I'll soon introduce you to a pattern that includes both windings of lead-substitute wire *and* a bead--that's serious weight.

I tend to prefer black or copper beads for imitative flies because they're more natural colors than gold--I've never seen a pupa or nymph with a gold head. On the other hand, there is the brightness factor--we'll get to that soon--and pumping that up in his Fox's Poopah may have been Tim's intention in choosing a gold bead.

When you consider how most caddis-pupa flies are fished, a bead becomes a logical addition. They are normally either 1. fished dead drift well down, or 2. swung and worked just under the water's surface to trout hovering there after real pupae (a variation of the swing is the Leisenring Lift, in which the fly is allowed to sink before it reaches the fish so that as the leader tightens it swings *upward* in front of his nose, but it's still more or less a swung nymph). For deep dead-drift fishing, the heavy bead is a real aid. And keeping a fly below the surface while the urging of the swing tries to pull it topside can be a challenge--the bead helps the fly stay down where you want it.



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One sensible argument for a gold bead is that it suggests the glow or sparkle many believe a caddis pupa possesses. Inside its shuck, the pupa releases gases to help separate shuck from body for a smooth emergence at the water's surface, and tiny bubbles may cling to the outside of the shuck. So a bright bead suggests some of this shine. But as you'll see, some other caddis-pupa flies sparkle from hook eye to bend.

Pettis' Pulsating Caddis Pupa

Photo by Skip Morris



Pettis' Pulsating Caddis Pupa (*Hydropsyche*) by Jim Pettis

HOOK: Heavy wire, humped shank, sizes 18-14.

THREAD: Olive (or brown) 8/0 or 6/0.

ABDOMEN: Four or five small orange glass beads. "Lava-Brown" Buggy Nymph dubbing worked forward in a dubbing loop under each bead and between the beads.

LEGS: Wood-duck flank-feather fibers.

HEAD: Dark-brown dubbing.

Instead of adding a single metal bead as the fly's head for weight, Jim Pettis used several glass beads to fill out the abdomen of his Pettis' Pulsating Caddis Pupa. (In fact, he does have a version with a gold-bead head--stone-heavy little fly!) Weight, of course, is provided by the beads. But that controversial glow of a caddis pupa I mentioned also results from the shine of slick glass. That shine softly illuminates the fur that's wound between the beads in a dubbing loop and brushed out to a shaggy layer. The rest of Pettis' Pulsating Caddis Pupa isn't far from Fox's fly--a bushy thorax, feather-fiber legs and antennae.

Soft-Hackle Flies

Here's an almost ancient solution, since soft-hackled flies go back (as best I can figure) over 150 years. Most soft-hackled patterns are really too skinny to pass for caddis pupae on careful inspection, but a soft-hackled fly's long pliant fibers angling out and waving with even light shifts of current seem to close the deal--they clearly appear as legs and

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Photo by Skip Morris



Partridge & Yellow (soft-hackled fly)

HOOK: Heavy wire, standard length or 1X long, sizes 18 to 10.

THREAD: Yellow 8/0 or 6/0.

ABDOMEN: Yellow floss.

THORAX: Hare's mask fur, full.

HACKLE: Natural-gray partridge (or hen back).

antennae to caddis-eating trout, since they've been eating soft-hackled flies during caddis hatches all this time.

Soft-hackled flies see use as imitations of hatching mayflies, too. And while the narrow floss bodies of most such flies do suggest the similarly slender abdomens of mayfly nymphs, there are no tails to suggest the tails of the naturals. Really, the point is, this is a simple, impressionistic fly-design that becomes a convincing imitation of either mayfly or caddis when properly fished.

An even greater point: How you fish a fly is nearly always more important than whether or not it has or should have legs, tails, whatever. Fish the perfect fly incorrectly and it will likely hook far fewer fish than a very imperfect fly fished to behave just like the natural.

Brick Back October Caddis

Not all caddis pupae swim boldly up in the open to either hatch or satisfy the cravings of trout. Here in the Northwest--in Washington and Oregon, northern California and western Montana, and in parts of British Columbia--we fly fishers spend autumn watching for a huge orange-bodied caddisfly commonly called the October caddis. Trout watch for it too--after all, it's a mouthful.

The October caddis swims low and un-caddislike along the riverbed to *crawl* out of the water and slough off its shuck, stonefly-style. So the strategies for fishing the Brick Back October Caddis are different than for most caddis imitations. Some prefer to toss an

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Brick Back October Caddis (Skip Morris)

HOOK: Standard to heavy wire, 2x long (slow-curve shank optional), sizes 10 to 6.

BEAD: Black metal.

WEIGHT: *Lead substitute* wire.

THREAD: Brown 6/0 or 3/0.

ABDOMEN: Arizona Sparkle Nymph Dubbing in Skip's October Caddis (or amber and orange rabbit fur blended) in a dubbing loop, built up section-by-section and then ribbed over brown poly yarn. The poly yarn is bound at the bend, then pulled forward and secured with the dubbing loop at the front of each dubbed section. (You'll find instructions for tying my Brick Back October Caddis in *Morris on Tying Flies*.)

HACKLE: Barred-brown or just brown saddle hackle or "soft hackle," longish.

THORAX: Arizona Sparkle Nymph Dubbing in brown or dark-brown (or any shiny brown dubbing).

imitation of the October Caddis well upstream, let it sink, and then swing it in low towards the bank, like the natural. I usually fish my Brick Back dead drift along the riverbed, pretty much standard indicator fishing.

The thing is, a caddis pupa emerges after weeks in its snug shelter with somewhat stiff legs...perfectly understandable. So it drifts for a while. Some come out faulty and have no choice but to drift. So, a dead-drift imitation makes sense to me. It also works--I fished the Brick Back one banner day on Oregon's Deschutes River to catch a whole lot of trout, including two of the largest I'd ever caught there and a seven-pound steelhead.



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The truth is, despite that it's normally fished differently than other caddis-pupa imitations, the Brick Back looks more or less like the rest. Its body is hunched and swells near its rear end, its long hackle fibers wave as legs and antennae, and it's heavy--a metal bead for a head and windings of lead-substitute wire in its core. It's also bright, in accordance with the clear gas-filled bubble-crustled sparkling outer skin the natural wears during its trip to the riverbank, thanks to the fine Mylar strands blended into its dubbed abdomen and thorax. It's tied in a way that staggers a series of dark bars up its back, with an otherwise amber-orange abdomen like the real October caddis pupa--the pupa is normally pale through the abdomen while the adult is a dull sort of medium orange. Go figure.

So, really, the big difference between my Brick Back and most pupa imitations is overall weight: mine's heavier. And that's because it's designed to ride down along the riverbed whether swung or drifted, while most pupae are fished just under the surface, which calls for only modest weight or none, other than a heavy wire hook.

There are obvious aspects to caddis-pupa imitation, and others considerably more subtle. Understanding both can help you select or tie yours wisely. And, perhaps hook you more caddis-seeking trout...



[CLICK HERE](#)

to watch a video of Skip showing caddis-pupa imitations and how one of them behaves underwater.

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DAVE HUGHES – CADDIS PUPAE: PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES



Photo by Rick Hafele

All photos by Dave Hughes except where noted

The most difficult part in solving any caddis pupa situation is knowing when you're in one. If you get that part sorted out, the rest becomes relatively simple. Rick will sort out the entomology, so you know what you're looking at when you encounter a caddis pupa, or more likely, a bunch of them with trout feeding on them. Skip will sort out the fly patterns, so you'll know what fly to use against those trout.

The pupal stage is brief, and transitional--meaning here the few seconds to scant minutes between the time that the pupa tumbles its way out of its secure retreat on the bottom, dashes to the surface, and completes the transition into the winged adult stage. This is the most vulnerable instant in the caddis life cycle. It's also the time that trout are most likely to feed selectively on the insect. But you're not nearly as likely as the trout to observe this stage of the beast, unless you hold your nose, plunge your head under the water, and gaze around for awhile in the watery world where both insects and trout abound.

So how do you tell when you've got a caddis pupa problem? First, look for adult caddis in the air, dancing around near streamside vegetation, or even on the water. Sometimes they'll be few; other times they'll appear on the surface in great numbers. But in both cases, it's not uncommon for trout to ignore them. You see enough caddis to cause some action, but see no rises, which is a puzzle. It's because the trout are down below, focused on pupae, which are easier for trout to capture. So if you see adult caddis around, but can't catch anything on dry flies that match them, then you know you need to turn to caddis pupa patterns.



When trout establish positions in the mid-depths during caddis emergences, they're taking pupae rising to the surface. If you're able to spot them, position yourself to sink a pupa pattern to their depth, then animate the fly just as it comes into sight of the trout.



When adult caddis are in the air, and trout refuse dry fly imitations, try swinging pupa imitations, or even soft-hackled wet flies. Trout will take them as pupae on the rise for emergence.

Switch to a pupa pattern, and you'll likely have the problem solved. Just going sub-surface as opposed to a dry can sometimes con the trout, even if the fly is not nearly an exact imitation. I've switched to soft-hackled wets or fuzzy nymphs countless times in such situations, and suddenly begun doing dances with those splashy risers, though the flies I used were far from accurate. It's better, however, when they are at least rough imitations.

At times you'll see caddis adults on the water, floating along, obviously emerging, with rise rings boiling up all around them. You try frantically to find the right imitation, but trout continually ignore all of your most accurate dressings. Cease fire and watch those rises awhile, and watch some caddis adults drift downstream among them. First, do any of the adults actually go down to death in the rises? If not, trout are not taking them, they're taking pupae that are about to become them. Second, are there bubbles left in those

Sometimes you'll see those same caddis adults, whether numerous or few, and notice that they seem to be under attack by trout making splashy rises. This occurs most often at or near evening, and on water that has a moderate to brisk current, and is often somewhat choppy on top: a run or even riffle. It seems an obvious situation for an Elk Hair or Deer Hair Caddis, but you try both and trout don't seem to see them. Again, the trout are taking caddis pupae, many times chasing them so near the surface that they send a splashy rise into the air on the take.



When trout feed on caddis, and send rise rings to the top, but fail to leave bubbles in the rises, they're taking pupae just sub-surface, and will rarely take an adult imitation. Fish a pupal pattern and you'll catch them.

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rise rings? Bubbles are your signal that the trout broke the surface in its take, and that fishing an emerger or dry fly makes some sense. In the absence of bubbles in the rise rings, switch to a pupa pattern. The trout are feeding sub-surface. You can cast dry flies all day and you won't find any happiness, unless the trout change their minds, start taking those floating adults...in which case you'll begin to see some adults disappear, and some bubbles left in rise rings.



Caddis pupae stage and drift along the bottom in the early stages of a hatch, and all through the hatch as well. That's the time to drift a pupa pattern, or pair of them, along the bottom with the standard indicator-and-shot method.

Sometimes, though it's rare, you'll know you're in a caddis pupa situation because you'll actually see caddis pupae. Most likely, short of dipping your eyes under, you'll observe them on your waders. They think you're a rock, placed conveniently mid-stream for their emerging pleasure. Glance at your waterline once in awhile; if you see anything crawling up to it, and launching life from there, you've been given all the clues you'll ever need. I must forewarn you, though, that in all my years fishing for trout, I've only had caddis pupae emerge by crawling up my waders a half dozen times. Normally, in a caddis pupa situation, you're simply not going to see them, and you're going to have to rely on less obvious clues.

The most common clue is the presence of adult caddis, but an entire absence of luck fishing floating imitations. If that ever happens to you, which it will often if you're out on streams more than a little, then switch to pupal patterns, and you'll find your success suddenly opening out.

Caddis pupae have three bits of behavior that predict your fishing method, all condensed into that very short time span, and none at all easy to observe from your

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normal fishing position with your head above the water. But pretend you're a trout for a moment. Go under, and you'll see caddis pupae, freshly tweezered out of their retreats, staging along the bottom, drifting from a few inches to a few feet to fifty feet or more, composing themselves, gathering their orientation for navigation to the top, and perhaps, metaphorically, pumping up their muscles and lungs for that swift dash up there. Trout find pupae easy pickings as the insects drift along with the currents, in the bottom feeding zone.

Photo by Rick Hafele



A net-spinning caddis (Hydropsyche sp.) pupa ready to swim for the surface.

Next, the pupae swim rather swiftly, and are buoyed by internal gases as well, from the bottom, through the mid-depths, and to the underside of the surface layer. This trip doesn't take them long; it's generally only necessary for them to cover from one to at most four or five feet, at least in moving water. But they're very vulnerable to trout in that moment of travel from bottom to top; trout often take stations a few inches to a foot or two deep, and dart here and there to intercept pupae intent on escaping up the water column.

Finally, the pupae reach the surface, and must break through it to emerge. Some do this quickly, bursting right through, and getting on with their business. But others encounter difficulties, and drift along just beneath the surface film, pausing, as it were, to regain their strength and catch their breath. This is in some terms a second staging, similar to the first one along the bottom, in which many insects drift, but this time scant inches deep. If enough of them get caught in this posture, trout hold high in the water column, and specialize on nipping at them. That's when you see adults on the surface, and rise-rings among them, but don't see any adults go down. The trout are feeding so close to the top that they form rises, but those rises don't break the surface, so you don't see bubbles in the resulting rings.

Your presentation methods, once you've determined you're in a caddis pupa situation, should cover these three phases: the bottom drift, the mid-depths dash, and the sub-surface drift.

To present nymphs that imitate pupae drifting deep, and also to fish the same flies in general searching situations, when you suspect that pupal patterns might work, but have no concrete evidence that it's true, then rig and fish the standard indicator-and-shot

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Nymph fishing with caddis pupa imitations can be effective on such caddis-rich waters as the Deschutes, in Oregon, almost any time throughout the long summer caddis emergence period.



method. You know the drill; this is the most common way to fish nymphs of any kind. Place a hard or bubble indicator one-and-a-half to two times the water depth above your split shot. Rig a single pupa pattern 10 to 12 inches below the shot, and improve the rig with another pupa pattern a similar length, trailed off the hook bend of the first. Fish the rig upstream with short casts, covering all the likely lies of trout. Be sure your flies are on or near the bottom; the difference between success and failure is often one size 4 split shot. If you're not catching fish, add one.



Famous Davy Wotton, known for his wet fly fishing methods, uses a 3-fly presentation, and a high-stick rod, to take trout whenever caddis are on the move along his home White River in Arkansas.

To cover trout holding higher in the water column and feeding on pupae passing through the mid-depths on their way to the top, rig for the standard wet-fly swing. Tie a single pupa imitation to the end of your leader, and a second one trailing it, to give trout a choice between dressings, and also to inspire their greed...they see two flies and for some reason it goads them to strike a lot more often than seeing just one. Present the flies on a cross-and-down swing. Mend to slow them. Let the fly, or flies, hang at the lower end of the swing. If you've had a

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take and missed it, or felt a tap, lift and lower the flies. This might incite a lurking trout to take another whack.

A strong hint here: I've always done my wet fly fishing with a floating line. But I've noticed over the years that a clear intermediate is fatal to trout on lakes and ponds, and have been experimenting with intermediate lines on streams. They sometimes work wonders; you should give one a try.



When trout rise, but don't leave bubbles in their rise rings, suspect they're taking caddis pupae even if an abundance of adults are on the surface. This happens frequently on such smooth water as the Bighorn River in Montana.

If trout are holding high in the water column, and feeding on pupae as they approach the surface, you can try the Leisenring Lift or Sawyer Induced Take, which I'll be a maverick and call about the same thing. In both cases, you spot a trout, take a position off to the side from it, cast some feet above it, let your pupa pattern sink freely to the level of the trout, then stop the rod to both animate and lift the fly, right there in the kill zone of the trout. This method, whichever name you give it, works wonders, but it's difficult to find a situation in which you can apply it: how often do you see your trout working a foot or two deep, and have a smooth enough set of currents upstream from their position that you can apply a sink, then a lift, with such precision? It's not often, but look for your chances, and you'll find them more often.

When trout are rising, but taking pupae just sub-surface rather than adults on top, rig a pupal pattern at the end of a fine tippet, the same leader setup you'd use to fish a dry fly. Fish it the same way as well: time a trout's rises, and scope out its feeding lane carefully, then cast a few feet upstream just as it's ready to rise again. Watch your leader tip carefully, where it enters the water. Sometimes you'll see it jump. Sometimes you'll see a flash out there. Sometimes you'll even see a rise form

well up to the surface. All are indications you've got a trout attached to your fly. Raise the rod quickly to set the hook, but don't yank. Do it softly; that's a fragile tippet you've got tied to your pupa pattern.

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A last method that solves an inordinate number of caddis pupa situations, especially those you're not able to read as such, is to fish an adult imitation for the caddis you see on the water, and drop a lightly-weighted pupal pattern about two feet off its stern. By doing this you give trout a choice: adult or pupa. Some trout will take the surface fly, others the sunk pattern. You won't necessarily catch twice as many trout. But you're likely to solve the situation, and figure out what the trout want, twice as fast. That never hurts.



An adult imitation and a pupa dropper make the perfect exploring combination when you're fishing broken water such as the Stillwater River in Montana during the summer caddis emergence period.

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News from Dave, Rick, & Skip!

MORE WORKSHOPS COMING UP!

Skip & Rick have the following fly-fishing school coming soon!

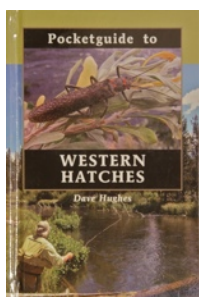
Trout Tactics with Skip Morris & Rick Hafele at Antelope Creek Lodge, CA

When: September 13-16, 2012

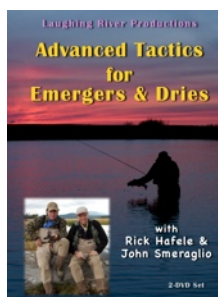
Where: Antelope Creek Ranch near Mt. Shasta, California

To register and get more info go to: <http://www.theflyshop.com/schools/workshops.html>

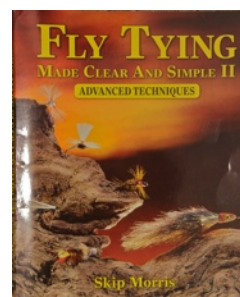
RECENT BOOK & DVD RELEASES



Dave's newest book, *Pocketguide to Western Hatches*, just out September 2011, is now available.--\$21.95--Stackpole Books, 2011



Rick's newest instructional DVD (2-disc set) with John Smeraglio titled, *Advanced Tactics for Emergers & Dries*, is now available. Order it online at www.laughingrivers.com or get at your local fly shop. \$29.95 - Laughing River Productions, 2011



Skip's latest book, *Fly Tying Made Clear and Simple II, Advanced Techniques*, offers thorough instructions for tying many great patterns for fussy trout. Frank Amato Pub, 2009

To learn more about Dave, Skip, and Rick's latest publications, where they are speaking, or to book them for your own program, go to their personal websites at:

Skip Morris: <http://www.skip-morris-fly-tying.com/>
Rick Hafele: <http://www.rickhafele.com/RH/Home.html>
Dave Hughes: <http://dave-hughes-fly-fishing.com/>